



SUMMER SEMINAR ON WORLD AFFAIRS 2009

The Situation:

It is Friday, September 11th, 2009. In 11 days—September 22nd—world leaders will gather at the annual summit meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Two days later, leaders of the 20 leading industrialized nations—the so-called G-20—will gather in Pittsburgh for its 3rd summit meeting in less than one year, focusing principally on economic recovery and energy and environmental issues.

Press reports out of Tehran indicate that Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—reelected in June 2009 in a highly contested election that was ultimately affirmed by the Iranian clerical leadership—will make a major foreign policy speech at the UNGA summit in September. In this speech, Ahmadinejad is expected to:

- Reiterate that his electoral victory, with over 62% of the popular vote, represents an important mandate for Iran's resurgence as a major power.
- Declare that important global issues—and especially issues in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia—should not be decided without including Iran as a major voice, reflecting both its over 2,500 year history as a great civilization and the “purification” of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.
- Reaffirm Iran's determination to establish a self-sufficient indigenous nuclear fuel cycle, including enrichment of uranium for peaceful nuclear power stations.
- Reject international pressure as bullying, interference into Iran's internal political affairs, and a violation of Iran's rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to develop civilian nuclear power.
- Reject the UN Security Council's demand (UNSC Resolution 1696, July 31, 2006) that Iran suspend uranium reprocessing and enrichment as “illegitimate,” despite the fact that the UNSC made this demand mandatory under international law.
- Accuse the international community as blocking Iran's inclusion among the major global powers—including the G-20, which will meet in two days without Iran.
- Criticize President Obama for not responding to Ahmadinejad's challenge in May to debate him directly at the UN.
- Acknowledge President Obama's June 4th Cairo speech as “potentially constructive,” affirm Iran's willingness to discuss “all global issues” with the U.S., but repeating that Iran's nuclear program was a “closed issue.”

President Obama—who will be speaking before President Ahmadinejad—is keen to negate the impact of the Iranian president's statement and establish the initiative in this latest round of the U.S.-Iranian relationship. The President is also conscious of the connections between this issue and a variety of other global issues—including nuclear proliferation and



FOREIGN POLICY SCENARIO

The U.S. and the New World Order

the challenges of North Korea, energy security, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian peace, economic development and recovery, and the growing role of many emerging political and economic powers. Ideally, Obama would want to preempt the Iranian president's message by placing the narrower U.S.-Iranian relationship in the context of broader global challenges, in which—Obama wants to assert—U.S. leadership, commitment, and vision are essential (and, by implication, Ahmadinejad's nationalistic assertions are less noble and more trivial).

The Task:

You are an ad hoc group of policy advisors and speechwriters, which the White House Chief of Staff has pulled together to:

- 1) Brainstorm the essential points that President Obama should make in his own UNGA Summit speech regarding these issues, and
- 2) Advise on any press talking points and other guidance (e.g., should the U.S. lay low publicly, or be proactive in engaging the press in response to reporting about Ahmadinejad's speech).

You must report to the White House Chief of Staff in one hour. In considering your response, you should:

- 1) Outline the principal U.S. interests that can be advanced or threatened in this situation.
- 2) Identify what parts, if any, of the expected Iranian message the President would want to counter, and which of those, if any, the President would want to support or preempt.
- 3) Highlight the three main messages that you think President Obama should make in his speech.
- 4) Advise on any advance talking points and other strategies that the White House should pursue in responding to the press on this question.

